

11/16/99 Drowned

Two workers, a 71-year-old laborer, and a 39-year-old mechanic, died as a result of a well drilling accident. The two victims were part of a crew drilling well water in a field on a remote section of a farm.

The workers' used a bulldozer to dig a 50 x 80-foot retention pond 8 feet deep, to catch the tailings from the drilling. The pond was sloped at each end, however, it was vertical on the sides. The tailings were a mixture of water, dirt, and soap like material used in the drilling process. The process created large quantities of foam. It was the laborers' job to spray a liquid on the foam to prevent damage to the equipment.

Part of the crew had already left the work site. The mechanic still on duty, radioed to see if the laborers had returned with them. The reply was that they had not. The mechanic called for assistance. When persons arrived 45 minutes later, they found the two bodies in the pond.

The laborer had been working near the edge of the retention pond where the walls were vertical. The foam from the drilling obscured the edge of the pond, and he fell in. The mechanic had gone in after him, as a result, both men drowned.

Question to ask?

- Do you clearly mark the edge of your retention ponds?
- Are all sides of your excavation sloped?
- Do you have an emergency rescue plan?
- Do your workers know what to do in the event of an emergency?
- Do you have a method to account for all of your workers?